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Victory Hall Association, New York

Victory Hall: New York City's proposed war...

New York

1920

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VICTORY HALL

NEW YORK CITY'S PROPOSED WAR MEMORIAL *and* FORUM

TO BE ERECTED UPON BLOCK

41st & 42nd STREETS
PARK & LEXINGTON AVENUES

ADDRESSES

BEFORE

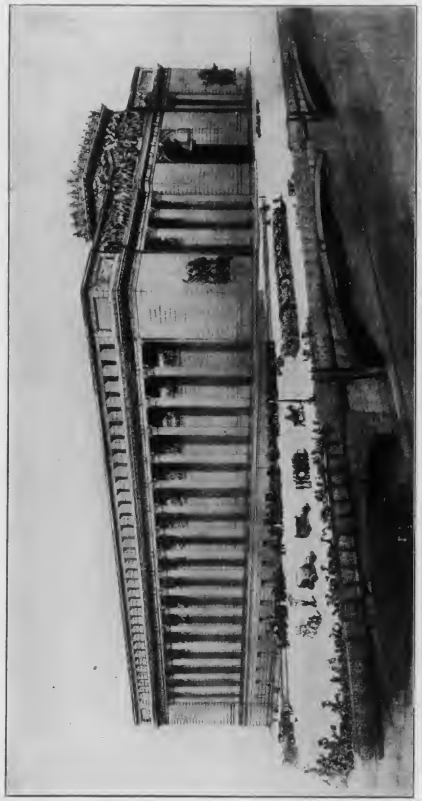
350 MEMBERS FROM OVER 230 POSTS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION AT A DINNER GIVEN BY THE

VICTORY HALL ASSOCIATION

AT THE HOTEL BILTMORE

THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 1920.

PRO PATRIA ET GLORIA



VICTORY HALL

PERSPECTIVE FROM PARK AVENUE AND FORTY-SECOND STREET.

VICTORY HALL

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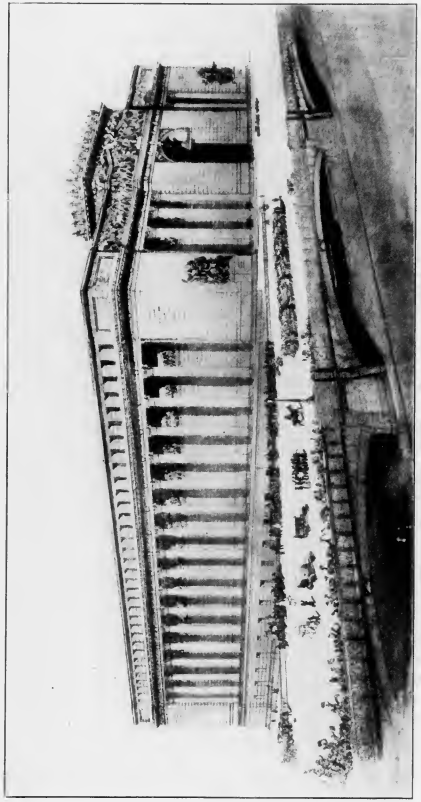

VICTORY HALL

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ADDRESSES

"PLANS OF THE VICTORY HALL ASSOCIATION"

GEN. GEORGE W. WINGATE, TOASTMASTER.

GEN. WINGATE: Ladies and Gentlemen: This is a wonderful gathering and differs from any other of the numerous dinners which I have attended in showing the difference between soldiers and civilians in that it started on time.

A number of speakers will address you this evening, each of whom is to speak for a very short time upon one of the many different phases which relate to Victory Hall.

I am assigned to speak on the subject of the "Plans of the Victory Hall Association."

It is a great big question, and the time that is allowed to go into it to any considerable extent is very little.

You have before you a monograph in which is an account of what it is we propose to do and who we are. In the back part of that you will find pictures representing the frontal elevation of the building and plans of the interior of the various floors. In addition, you have before you a cut from the Sunday World giving a sectional plan of the building, which affords you an idea of what the general layout is to be.

I therefore will be as brief as I can possibly be in describing to you what the plans of this hall are and what the Victory Hall Association is.

When, some two years ago, there was a talk of taking advantage of the fact that half of the block which

is south of the Grand Central Depot was vacant, the City having purchased it, torn down the former Grand Union Hotel, and built a subway underneath it (which of course reduced the value of the land), some people proposed converting the surface into a park. Many of us, I particularly representing, as you know, the Public Schools Athletic League, opposed spending the City's money for this purpose because the area was too small to make a park which would be worth the expense. This, however, called the attention of myself and some others to the fact that that particular site had advantages that no other site in this city, that we know anything about, had, for the location of a grand Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, in the erection of which we were greatly interested.

A Soldiers Memorial, such as we considered and still consider the City should have, to be of sufficient value to make up for the tremendous sum it will cost, must not be tucked away in a side street like the Chamber of Commerce or the Metropolitan Museum, but must be in the focus of every possible system of transportation to which the people of the entire city can have access for a single fare. This is especially the case in the interest of those that I represent, the boys and girls of the public schools. Five cents is a big item to them, and if we are going to have a hall where they will hold their games and exercises, it must be in a location where they do not have to pay more than that amount to get to it. The site we have selected is such a place.

It also has another advantage that is possessed by no other site which is in half as accessible a position as this, in that here is half a block of ground with nothing on it in the shape of buildings, and a large part of the subsurface of which is used by a subway.

Now I ask, do any of you know any location in New York which is as easily accessible for a five cent fare from all the different boroughs as this is, and where,

if a whole block is taken, it will not be necessary to pay several million dollars to get rid of the costly buildings that cover the upper surface of it?

What is the use, therefore, of talking about the great value of the land compared with property in other locations if we do not have to pay here for any buildings as we would if we had to select any other block.

Then, again, this site possesses another value for the purposes of Victory Hall. I know of no other block in the city which, like this, as you will see in the newspaper picture, has two levels; one, the level of 42d and 43d Streets, by which the lower floor can be reached from each of its four sides, and second, the level of the Park Avenue Esplanade, which will also be the level of the second story where the great Convention Hall is to be, so that a regiment of soldiers or a big political procession can march up or down Park Avenue through the Triumphal Arch that forms the central part of the Park Avenue front and right into this Convention Hall.

In all the other locations, if a building should be constructed having the various stories contemplated in our plans, 10,000 people who would assemble in the great Convention Hall in a big meeting, would be thrown into congested streets. Here they are turned out on the Park Avenue Esplanade where there is very little traffic, while those who desire to go on the lower level may go downstairs. We therefore concluded that this was the best site in the city for the Memorial Hall we had in mind. Consequently, a number of gentlemen who were on a Mayor's Committee which had been appointed a year before for the purpose of formulating a plan for a Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, who regretted that that Committee had never been assembled and that no plans had been suggested to or by it, felt that valuable time was being wasted and decided we would propose some plan of our own.

We were fortunate in finding two architects who were among the best in the city, and there are few better in the country; men who belonged to the American Legion, had served on the other side, and who were deeply interested in this matter. They volunteered to prepare plans and drafted those you have before you. These plans have received highest praise from those most competent to judge.

I will address myself to what those plans are:

Assuming that one starts on the level of 41st Street and 42nd Street, entering on the Park Avenue side, he will come into a great foyer or corridor. From each end of this he will descend a circular stairway to a lower level. Here will be a room longer than this ballroom, 72 feet wide and 200 feet long. This is to be called the "Hall of the Allies." It is intended to be a memorial of those nations whose troops fought with ours and we propose to leave it to them (and we can leave it to no better people) to place there such trophies, portraits and statues as they think most fitting to convey to your minds and to the minds of our people what their armies were and what they think of our soldiers and sailors who served with them. These undoubtedly will include portraits of Joffre, Foch, Haig, and their other great leaders.

Passing through this great Hall he will descend another flight of stairs which will lead into what is the heart of the whole thing. This will be a solemn and beautiful "Memorial Shrine." It is proposed to be a lofty room 70 feet square, encircled by a colonnade of black marble or some similar material. It is to have at its far end the handsomest statue signifying the Spirit of America, of Liberty, that American art can produce. In front of this is to be a dignified and solemn Altar, and upon that Altar it is proposed to have a flame kept perpetually burning to signify to posterity in the ages to come the spirit of your dead comrades, and of those other men and women from New York City who gave their lives in support

of their flag and their country on the other side of the Atlantic as well as in the camps on this side. This, I think, is a beautiful spiritual idea, and I know nowhere where anything exists equal to it.

Many of you, I suppose, have been in Paris and seen the Tomb of Napoleon. It is a wonderful and solemn thing. Everybody who visits Paris and can do so, goes there. It is "the heart of France." It, however, was built to recall the exploits of a soldier and a conqueror. Our "Memorial Shrine" is to represent the spirit of patriotism, shown by your comrades who made the supreme sacrifice for the Republic.

It is proposed to devote the portion of this floor not occupied by this Shrine and the Hall of the Allies, for the benefit of the rising generation, including those young men who are engaged in business where they cannot obtain athletic exercise, and for this purpose to put there fifty short distance rifle galleries and a fair-size drill room for the use of our high-school boys and for other young men that want to keep up their athletics and to learn to shoot.

The floor above this level, and which will be on that of 41st and 42d Streets, will be the only thing of a business proposition that is connected with the affair. This floor, which will be 200 by 400 feet, with the exception of the part that is taken up by stairways, is to be an Exhibition Hall for all kinds of business exhibitions, automobile, electric shows and all that sort of thing. There are many of these who are in need of a place of that kind which is fireproof, and who are willing to pay a substantial rent for its use. This rent we propose to devote to maintain the building, and to pay for elevator service, lighting, heating and cleaning, which is going to cost between $200,000 and $300,000 a year.

The floor above the street level will be occupied by the grand Convention Hall that I have mentioned. You will remember that when President Wilson made

his recent Western tour, wherever he went in the large cities of the West, he found that they had constructed big Convention Halls in which the people assembled to meet their President. Yet New York has got nothing of the kind and one is greatly needed. When Joffre and Viviani, Balfour and the Prince of Wales, Cardinal Mercier and the King of Belgium and the other distinguished guests who visited the City were here, there was no place for the Mayor to receive them except a little room in the City Hall, and the only place where the athletic meetings even of the school children can be held is in the armories which are needed for military purposes.

Here will be a Convention Hall with an arena in it which will seat 5,000 people and if seats are put in the arena it will seat 10,000.

There will be a spiritual feature in connection with this Convention Hall which exists nowhere else that I know of, and which I am sure will appeal strongly to you.

The Victory Hall Association is now procuring from the records of the Red Cross, the War Department, and other sources, the names of every man and of every woman (estimated to be 6,000 and upwards in number) who either in the Military or Naval service of the country, or in the Red Cross, or Salvation Army, or the Knights of Columbus or any of the other organizations of men and women who served in connection with our troops or with the Canadians or our other Allies, gave their lives for the service of the Republic, and intends to inscribe the names of every one of them upon a broad metal band which will go entirely around that hall. So that, for the ages to come there will be in this Convention Hall an indestructible record of the names of your departed comrades and the men and women who served to help you on the other side; to show to posterity as well as to you and those who are here, that the people of New

York City think enough of them and what they have done, not to erect a statue to a general or any other individual, but to publicly and conspicuously record the name of the humblest alongside of the generals, provided they both made the highest sacrifice for their Country.

On the floor above the Convention Hall there is a space which seems small on the newspaper publication but it is really very large.

The ceiling of the Convention Hall will be flat for acoustic purposes. But being 200 feet wide the girders that support it must be very strong and these will be of lattice work and about 30 feet deep. The floor, however, which contains 80,000 square feet, is divisible into rooms of different sizes. We propose to turn it all over to the American Legion and to divide it into such manner as the officers of the Legion may suggest.

On the next or upper floor there will be a much higher space. It is proposed to place in the center of this a hall 125 feet wide and 235 feet long. This will be lighted by side windows above and is to be for the use of the Legion and the other societies that will have rooms in that building, so that when they desire to hold a meeting of any kind, a dance, a sparring match, anything that they desire which will bring together a larger number than can be accommodated in any of the post rooms, yet which will be too small to use the Convention Hall, there will be a room which will always be at their service. The rest of that floor we propose to cut up into small rooms and to turn these over to these different societies,—the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Knights of Columbus, and others, as Memorial Rooms where they may keep in this fireproof building as much of their records of their members, their trophies and matters connected with their service in the war, as they see fit.

This briefly is the building that we plan. We propose that it shall be built and paid for by private subscription.

We do not ask the City or the State for a single cent. On the contrary, we intend through the subscriptions of our friends and from the public, to raise the fifteen to twenty million dollars that the land and building will cost. The City is in no financial condition to contribute and the money can be raised in no other way except that which we have adopted. We believe, and you yourselves know, that private individuals working on this thing as a business proposition having no personal interest in the matter whatever, except to do the best that can be done to secure in our day an adequate memorial of this kind, can do so in one-quarter of the time, for one-quarter of the money, and four times better than it can be done by the City, the government or any other public body.

The Victory Hall Association is organized on the same lines as the great enterprises of the kind which have been heretofore organized in this city and which have been successful. We have copied almost exactly the methods under which the Metropolitan Museum was organized and is now being carried on. These are the same that were employed in the Zoological Garden and largely in the Public Library and in the Museum of Natural History, and will be a nobler contribution to civic uses than either of these great institutions.

Some have said—"Why are these people giving so much time to a thing of this kind? It must be because somebody is going to make some money out of it." I must confess that before the World War one would not be surprised whenever anybody undertook to carry out a great scheme for the public good, to learn that he or she had been accused of being actuated by some ulterior purpose. But it does seem to me, I must confess, that in view of the wonderful sacrifices that have been made during the last three years here in the City of New York by rich and poor alike to help the war and to aid and assist the men who were on the other side, that no such charge would be made against those

who in the same spirit were endeavoring after the war was over to do something to honor the memories of those who served and died. But be that as it may, I want to assure you, gentlemen, that this is not in any sense a business proposition and I hope that you know enough about my associates and myself to believe that what I say to you is true.

Victory Hall Association is organized as a philanthropic organization,—what is known as a Membership Corporation. It has no capital stock; its officers (beyond its executive staff who give their entire time to it) receive no salaries, and there is no possible way in which anybody connected with it can make any money out of what it proposes to do. Moreover, if you look at the names of the men and women who are numbered among its directors you will see that they are people who have for the last three years in particular been prominent in every movement that has been carried out in this city relating to the war and to sustaining those who were carrying it on. They are people who have been active in promoting the work of the Red Cross, the Allied Charities, and the Knights of Columbus, and the many other similar organizations, and their reputation and character cannot be truthfully questioned by anybody. We have united in this attempt to raise the millions required for this great Memorial. If we fail that is our loss.

But we think we will not fail. Some criticize us and ask—"Why we don't do this," and—"why we don't do the other"; but they do not realize what we have to contend against.

I wish to tell you that the people who have been engaged in this kind of work during the war are now tired. They have been working in a way hitherto unheard of and have spent their money like water. In the Liberty Loans and other similar drives they contributed more than they could afford. They feel "tired" and while their hearts are all right it is very hard to again stir up their enthusiasm so as to get

money or work out of them now that the stress and strain of the war are over.

The men and women who compose this Association have had their sons and other relatives on the other side; some of whom have not come back. They feel keenly, as I feel strongly, and I am sure Major Putnam, who is a Loyal Legion man who remembers everything about the Civil War, must from his own bitter experience of the Civil War Veterans, also agree that if the people of the city are ever going to do anything for the men who served their country during the World War, the time to do it *is now*.

Now, when we, who still have in our minds how we felt when our relatives left us to go over to the other side; we who do not forget how daily with beating hearts and eager eyes we studied the casualty lists as they appeared every morning to see if the names of any of our beloved ones were among them; we who recall that inexpressible feeling of joy—and certainly in my long life it never came to me before—when we learned that the armistice had been signed and our sons and relatives were coming back to us and who recall how we felt when we greeted them when they returned triumphant and victorious.

Is it not self-evident that if we do not care enough for our boys, if we do not care enough for what they and their comrades have done to raise this $20,000,000 that is requested, that it will not be done for many years and that New York will have reason to be ashamed of herself.

I am confident we will do it—I am sure we will.

Please remember that we are not asking you gentlemen—(I will not call you gentlemen, I will call you "men"; as soldiers should be called). We are not asking you men to do anything in the way of giving us any money. We will take care of that to the best of our ability. We know it is an awful task, a terrible

task that we have before us, but we intend to undertake it.

We have called you together to explain to you just what our plan is and just what we are doing. All that we ask you to do is "to get out and whoop for it," to help us to create a public sentiment, which will radiate all through the country and recreate a spirit among the people of the city such as existed at the time of the drive for the Red Cross and for the Liberty Loans, and which if created will enable us to get the money required for Victory Hall, great as that sum will be.

There is a thing that I omitted to mention that I want to refer to before I close. That is the question I have heard asked, "What is the Legion going to pay for its use of Victory Hall?" The answer is practically nothing.

In recently talking with the representatives of the Legion they were unanimous that the Legion did not want to be put in the position of not contributing something for what they were to receive. Our own idea is not to charge any rent at all but to allow the Legion and its members to contribute whatever they see fit to do towards the expenses for electricity, cleaning, and perhaps, though I do not perhaps see how we could figure it out, the expense of heating.

But we do not intend to charge you anything in the way of rent. If anybody says why, I will tell you that it is because we want to help the Legion and in addition, and this is conclusive answer to the whole proposition (ignoring the question that we want to do it because we think it is right toward the Legion) that we will not charge rent because whatever parts of that building are used for business purposes will be taxed, while whatever parts are used for charitable and beneficial purposes will not be. Consequently if we would undertake to try to make a profit in the way of getting expensive rents from the Legion, we would have to pay more taxes on the property than

the Legion could ever possibly pay us and we do not intend to do anything of the kind.

I feel already that I have taken up a great deal more time than I ought to and I will therefore close my remarks and introduce the speakers. [Applause.]

We have with us tonight Brigadier-General William J. Nicholson, a distinguished soldier who took the 79th Division to the other side, and commanded it for a while there and distinguished himself greatly in commanding his brigade. I have the pleasure of introducing BRIGADIER-GENERAL WILLIAM J. NICHOLSON [Applause].

"KEEPING AMERICANISM ALIVE IN AMERICA"

BRIGADIER-GENERAL WILLIAM J. NICHOLSON

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND BROTHER MEMBERS OF THE LEGION:

I am one of you. I want you to know that from the start and I have been with you from the beginning [Applause]. I was asked to come tonight and make a little talk on any subject that was nearest my heart. I am free to say that the subject of Americanization and keeping Americanism alive in America is the one that is nearest to me and most vital to you now. Even with the possibility of being called a crank, and if I am called a crank, I would rather be called a crank on Americanism than anything on God's earth. [Applause.]

I feel I can speak feelingly on this subject. As many of you know, that for the last year I have been in command of the demobilization camp at Camp Upton, and through that organization passed a very vast number of the young men coming home from the other side to be demobilized. These men came home filled with the pride of their achievement. Most of them American one hundred per cent, some not quite so large. When they reached here I found a propaganda being preached and thrown at these young men. I found that there were clubs masquerading under the name of soldiers' clubs almost in the sight of the flag staff at Camp Upton that were preaching anything in the world but what a soldier ought to hear.

Now, men, as you will recall just now,—you are men. You have done a man's job and you have done it well [Applause].

You know a great many persons say that we went over there to make the world safe for democracy.

[Applause.] I doubt if you or any of us ever thought of democracy. We thought of home and what it meant to us when we compared conditions in our homes here to the ones we knew existed on the other side. We all felt what could happen to this country if we were not successful. But thank God, we were.

Now there has not been and never will be a time when the question of Americanism in America is so vital as just at this moment. You have seen conditions in Russia; you have just recently observed conditions in Germany. We know that these conditions now have come down to us and been crystallized and brought to the front and shown up to the people through a process of evolution.

A few years ago in Russia there were two classes: the Nihilists and the others. The Nihilists were the ones that said "Down with all rulers!" The other under various names, "Down with all order." These people have gained momentum in their own country and become such a great force that they have been able to project their doctrines into our country. In the first place, we want to be such strong Americans that we will impress upon everybody, every law-giver in America, that we don't want that class of people here. [Applause.]

Now this talk of mine is not aimed against the foreigners. There are thousands of foreigners in this country who have in them the making of good Americans. I know that, because very recently at Camp Upton they started what is known there as the "Recruit Educational Center." That is, they have thrown off the bridle of requirements for enlistment and now permit us to enlist men that cannot read or write the English language. My problem was to teach them English, make them soldiers, and, above all, make them Americans and gentlemen. I can assure you in ninety days we taught them to read and write; made good soldiers out of them and made them citizens of the United States. [Applause.]

Now that avenue of Americanization is open. To illustrate to you how those men felt and how truly American they were, when your New York papers said that a bunch of the people that the Government was contemplating deporting were going to be sent out to Camp Upton to be taken care of, a delegation of these American soldiers that were there, that could not speak English ninety days before, said, "General, we would like to guard these men." Naturally, I did not know why. So I asked, and I must tell you in their language. They said, "We want to guard them so that we will be sure there will not be a damn one of them get away." [Laughter.]

Now, that was true Americanism. That was just the quotation exactly. They were so imbued with the idea of Americanism that they did not want one of those fellows to get away. They wanted all of them sent out of the country.

Now, my friends of the Legion, we have a mighty and potent force here in the Legion to Americanize the rest of America that needs it. By your example and by talking to these people, teaching them what American institutions are, above all things, teaching them that the American has some obligations, not all rights. That is one thing in America we forget. How often as you think back over your life have you ever thought of your obligations? You can go onto the street corner and listen for five minutes and you will hear "my rights" fifty times or a hundred times to once where you will hear a man speaking of his obligations.

Now, we have obligations. They go hand in hand and these people, when they come over here and accept our hospitality and receive our protection, must be taught that they have obligations and that they cannot have any rights without they comply with what we determine is their obligation. Now, it is up to you gentlemen to teach them that.

To illustrate how strong and great is our desire to carry out this idea of Americanism and Patriotism in our memorial that the General has just spoken of. A special room is set aside down in the lowest chambers of it, hewn out of solid rock, so it will never be destroyed, and there a light will be kept burning constantly and everlastingly in front of that altar to perpetuate the feelings and the reasons and the Americanism of those boys who are honored by this building.

My friend spoke a few moments ago of the Tomb of Napoleon. It is a wonderfully imposing edifice. No doubt many of you visited it, no doubt at the same time I did, but you did not see it. Why? Because it was covered with sand-bags to protect it from the enemy's airplanes and shells.

Now, gentlemen, if we don't keep alive this spirit of Americanism in this country, and we build a memorial here, we will have to cover it with sand-bags or put it deeper in the ground than we know how to dig if we wish to preserve it, and Americanism is the only thing that is going to bring about such condition of affairs, that we won't have to cover up or sink in the bowels of the earth the memorial that we are building to our boys. [Applause.]

GEN. WINGATE: Fifty-nine years ago, the gentleman whom I shall next request to speak became a private in the United States Volunteer Army. He is not quite as old as I am, because I will be eighty on the first of July, and I think he is only some seventy-six. But it does not make any difference as we are both on deck and both going strong. [Laughter and Applause.]

Major Putnam enlisted as a private and fought his way up to the rank of Major. He marched through the mud of Louisiana and was in the hottest parts of the fighting of the Civil War. He has been prominent in the Loyal Legion, of which he is now Commander, and in many other patriotic societies. Before this war and during it, there probably was no man in the United States with the exception of Theodore Roosevelt who was a stronger or more effective advocate for preparedness and in prosecuting this war up to the handle, than he was. I have the pleasure of introducing MAJOR GEORGE HAVEN PUTNAM. [Applause.]

"THE BOYS OF '61 TO THE VETERANS OF '18 AND '19"

MAJOR GEORGE HAVEN PUTNAM

MY DEAR FRIEND GENERAL WINGATE (A GOOD YOUNG MAN FOR A COMRADE), COMRADES, MEN AND WOMEN, WHO HAVE SERVED IN THE GREAT WAR:

I give greetings from the old boys of '61 to the young veterans of '18 and '19.

I may state here, (of course, in confidence), that in the meetings of the Loyal Legion, I have the honor of being the Commander of the New York Commandery, we have during the past two years had various talks about you fellows. As from time to time, we got the reports of your effective service at Chateau Thierry, Belleau Wood, in the Argonne and elsewhere, in which you boys seemed to be behaving yourself, we decided that we could not have done the work better ourselves, and, as we are a conceited lot, that is really high praise.

I am a believer in the importance of sentiment. Without sentiment there can be no national feeling, which is the foundation of national strength, and the basis of what General Nicholson has eloquently described as Americanism.

Believing as I do in sentiment, I realize the value of monuments and of memorials. A monument should be a beautiful thing in itself and in that case it is worth while as an expression of beauty and a record of men or of events as has been the service of many of the great monuments of this world. When, however, it is possible so to shape a monument that it can, in addition to its value for art and for a memorial, render practical service to the community and to successive generations, it becomes doubly valuable. The fact that successive groups of the later generations

can secure practical service from a monument of this kind and through such service are brought into repeated relations with it, increases, of necessity, its value as a memorial.

Victory Hall, this great monument, as it has now been planned and worked out into a beautiful architectural design,—and it is a beautiful conception—has been planned, as we all know and as the General has very clearly stated to you,—in the first place, as a memorial of the service of the young veterans who have passed, who made the last sacrifice for the Republic and as an acknowledgment also of the service of the equally loyal boys who having done their work and have been spared to come back to us.

I had the misfortune, and for a veteran interested in the purpose of defending the Republic it was a real misfortune, of not having the right kind of a family. My first boys were all girls, but later I had a young son who at the time of the outbreak of the war was seventeen. He did his best to get into the ranks with you, but he was a year too young and the authorities would not accept him.

In the spring of 1918, I went to England at the invitation of Lord Bryce and some other representative Britons, to do some preaching. At that time, the beginning of the fiercest of the German offensives, England needed a little cheering up. I told that you boys were coming. I described you most eloquently and prophesied all the great things that you were going to do, and by George, you did them. But while I was in England that rascal of a boy of mine skips up to Canada, swears that he was born in England, that he was 18 years old, and that he was an orphan. On the basis of this bunch of mis-statements, the boy secured admission into the Royal Air Service, did his six months training, got his certificate as a pilot, passed his first examination for Lieutenant, the Corps was ordered on board the transport, and then before

they sailed, the armistice came. The Corps was dissolved and my boy came back to New York with a great grievance. He put it up to me. "Daddy, I thought you were a man of some influence; you were bound to keep this war going another year." I replied, "Your daddy is officially dead. You have sworn tc it. You have no business to growl at me." I had other members of my family doing service, but I must admit to having been short one son.

General Nicholson has spoken eloquently of the larger purposes of this great memorial. It commemorates not only your own service, but also what Americanism means for this country, for Europe, and for the world. It emphasizes what it meant in the fighting that you boys have done, and it should further constitute an expression on the part of America of its obligation to do its share in adjusting the problems of the world, in helping to maintain the peace of the world.

The building of Victory Hall should express to New Yorkers and to visitors the expectation of New York City and of America that the greatest, strongest, richest country in the world will not shirk its duty in peace any more than it has been willing to shirk its duty in war.

You boys know, and we veterans know, the miseries of war, but we realize also that there are things which are worse even than war. Liberty must be protected, rights must be secured, obligations must be fulfilled, even though fighting may be necessary for the purpose. War is, however, in itself such an abominable anachronism that there has come into being today throughout the world a righteous purpose on the part of all the non-aggressive people that there must be no more wars of aggression. Such wars belong, as we claim, to the rubbish of by-gone centuries.

The idea of war as the only practical settlement of international grievances will be put aside with the

rubbish of past centuries, with the nonsense of the "divine right" of kings, a conception absolutely antagonistic to the American theory of the state and of the rights of men, of government by the people and for the people.

We realize what this war has done in building up the spirit of nationality among our own people. I may say for myself that, with the memories of the conscription troubles in July, 1863, we did not feel assured concerning the sturdiness and the patriotism of the whole mass of our citizens, or whether when the Republic called upon its citizens to maintain the rights and to fulfill the obligations of America, the response would be without serious protest.

It was an enormous relief to us older men that the country did respond; that our hundred odd millions of people, comprising perhaps thirty millions with British heritage and seventy millions representing every variety of race antagonism, prejudices and faiths, that these hundred millions were really citizens who would recognize their duty to the Republic. They gave good proof of their citizenship and in fighting together shoulder to shoulder they have made good their promise and their obligations. We have as a result of the war, with all its miseries and sadnesses, this great satisfaction. We know that our nation possesses an assured foundation; we know from what you men and women have done that in any calls that the Republic may have occasion to make in the future, it can depend upon its children.

There is a further advantage in a war fought as this war has been fought, in which America assuredly had no thought of gain or advantage, and gave its service purely as a matter of obligation and as a recognition of our interest in the peace of the world.

We realize that in fighting shoulder to shoulder with our allies, with France, with England and with Italy, we had accepted our part in the work of the world. You boys have done what you could towards the reali-

zation of this ideal of the twentieth century, the ideal of comradeship among the non-aggressive nations of the world. This ideal represents an enormous gain for the present and for the future.

It is a great thing also that in a memorial like this, the main purpose of which is, as said, to commemorate the work of the girls and boys in blue and in khaki, you are able to associate a great service to our community, to the City of New York.

General Wingate has pointed out that in this, the greatest City on the Continent, in the near future to be the greatest City in the world, we have heretofore had no civic centre. Now, to have such a civic centre created in this building, resulting from the dream of our General-Poet, to have such centre associated with your service, with the memory of your dead comrades, and to have it express the civic patriotism of our great metropolis, that is in itself a noteworthy thing for New York and it is a great thing for you young veterans. In my mind a great part of the beauty of this plan is that it spreads in so many practical and serviceable directions. The larger thought is through the monument to the higher patriotism, to the great ideals and to the great sacrifices, but there is also the practical service which is to bring the building into the touch and the life of all intelligent New Yorkers.

As I visualize the ideal represented by this building, I go back, and you can go back more closely than I can, to the school boy days. Most of you have read the great address (as presented by Thucydides) which was given by Pericles in memory of the dead of Athens. It was to commemorate these dead, the boys who had died for the liberties of the Republic, that Pericles was planning for the construction of the Parthenon, the great monument of Athens. Our Victory Hall is in its conception nearer to the thought of that wonderful bit of world's architecture, the Parthenon, than is the case with any building that has been planned for this country. The Parthenon

commemorated the service of the boys of Athens who had died in the defense of the Republic, while it was also to serve as the civic centre of the life of Athens, the life of the best of Greece. Victory Hall, commemorating those who have fought and those who have died for the Republic, and serving as the national centre for your American Legion, is also to serve as the centre of the life of the City of New York. You boys are to hand down to your children and to your grandchildren, with the realization of this ideal, the purpose of honoring the highest and the largest things that Americans can do and that Americans have done, and in this way you are to make your contribution to the education of the American citizen.

General Nicholson said, and with truth, that the term American does not depend upon birth, or race, or faith; it depends upon the acceptance of American ideals. One of the best Americans I ever knew was my dear friend and comrade Carl Schurz, who began the study of the English language when he came to this country at the age of twenty-two or twenty-three.

I remember when Schurz made an eloquent speech from one side of the platform in German to a German audience and from the other side an equally eloquent talk in forcible English to an American audience. Schurz then said, speaking to the Americans: "You men, most of you, are American, so to speak, from accident. You were born here because your parents belonged here or came here. I am an American by the free choice of my mature age; an American because I believe in the ideals for which America stands; an American because in our fight in Europe (you will bear in mind that Schurz had his part in the Revolution of 1848) we were fighting for the political liberty that you Americans enjoy here. I failed to secure this liberty in the land of my birth and I am now enjoying it as a loyal American citizen, an American by adoption."

An American by conviction as described by Schurz is the kind of an American that you and I are prepared to honor. It is what America stands for at home, and it is the ideal for which it is to stand abroad.

You stand for the best of Americanism, and this building which is to commemorate your service is to be the Parthenon of America, expressing the spirit of Americanism.

GEN. WINGATE: Gentlemen: There is one sentimental and practical idea that I have that I omitted, and that I would like to mention as briefly as possible. That is this: That the American Legion is going to be for the next thirty years the stabilizing forces for the United States of America and don't you forget it. [Applause.] And it is for that reason I have considered that as a sound business proposition, laying aside any feeling of gratitude for what you have done, but as a matter purely of security for the future that the people of the country and particularly of this city, should do everything they can to keep the American Legion together and that they should not allow its Posts to be compelled to do what the Posts of the Grand Army have had to do—struggle and slave and beg money in order to maintain a place of meeting. You young men cannot realize how fast time passes. Unfortunately, men like Major Putnam and I do, and the older you get the faster it goes. The Posts of the Grand Army very soon found that their members were getting to be middle-aged and then to be old men. During this period they were having many calls upon them; their comrades were dying; they were leaving widows and orphans that had to be taken care of, and many of the Posts had a hard time to procure any place where they could hold their meetings.

Now we want to provide in this building a place where the Legion will be made secure in the future so that for fifty or sixty years to come, as long as any of you are here, there will be sure to be a place where you will have a right to assemble and consult. We also desire to keep you together so that by meeting and talking over old times you will maintain the patriotic spirit which you had when you went on the other side, and which actuates you now. We feel that the people of the City cannot do a better thing as a mere business proposition, for all of them, rich or poor, to unite to supply the funds that will be necessary to enable you to do this.

The next speaker that I am going to call is not a "doughboy," but a man who has not only a national but an international reputation as one of the great sailors of the United States; I introduce to you ADMIRAL BRADLEY A. FISKE. [Applause.]

"AMERICANISM ABROAD"

REAR-ADMIRAL BRADLEY A. FISKE

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It was not until our war with Spain that Americans were respected abroad. Before that war Europeans thought very seldom about Americans, and confused the countries of North and South America together in the most extraordinary way. Several times in France I found being known as an American, it was supposed that I was a native and resident of Brazil. [Laughter.]

The Battle of Manila opened the eyes of Europeans with a start to a realization of the amazing fact that Americans had actually beaten Europeans in an important battle. The Battle of Manila was followed by a battle off Santiago, then by later land battles in Cuba, and finally by our triumph over Spain.

The result of the war with Spain was as important as the result of any war in history, for the reason that although the numbers engaged on each side were comparatively few, and although the numbers of killed and wounded were comparatively few, yet the war itself was decisive to an almost unprecedented degree. As a result, the United States at once took a place in the centre of the stage in the great world drama then being enacted, and assumed a most important role, which it has ever since maintained. That war constituted a crisis for this Republic; and never before did a country so wealthy and populous advance so suddenly from a position of unimportance and isolation to a position second to one other only among the nations of the earth.

After that war, we acted our part worthily and effectively for a while, under the guidance and inspiration of Theodore Roosevelt. [Applause.] But

gradually the poison of pacifism spread through the system of the Nations. Patriotic ideals faded away. The national imagination ceased to picture great ideas. Feminism replaced manliness; sloth replaced energy. Money getting, and money spending occupied the attention of the men and the women. The resources of ingenuity were ransacked to wipe out from the minds of the people the memories of the wars by which we had gained our independence and afterwards had maintained it. Even the services of Washington, as general, were put in the background behind his later and very much easier services as President.

As a result the Nation started on the downgrade towards national degeneracy, following the old examples of Babylon, China and Greece and Rome. The young men adopted a slouchy gait, a discourteous manner and effeminate habits, and neglected those exercises and those sports that promote and maintain a worthy manliness.

Germany observed this, and came to the natural conclusion that the United States could exert and would exert no military force for any purpose whatever, and soon started to carry out a project of getting dominion over Europe and afterward of America, and the rest of the world. But the spirit of America was not dead, although it had been dormant. Under the inspiration of the force and genius of Roosevelt, America arose like a lion from its sleep and rushed to the rescue of Europe and the world.

The conscious memory of this pervades the Nation now. We realize what we accomplished and keep a living memory of the glorious men who fought and bled. But as time goes on, the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the pursuit of pleasure, will wipe out the memory of the sacrifices made and the achievements gained, as they have often done before. Remember Roosevelt is gone. Americanism is in danger.

The strongest and most effective single agency for preserving it will be Victory Hall. It will keep alive in our hearts a memory of our fallen dead. It will be a continuous inspiration to patriotism. It will be a continuous incentive to be Americans worthy to have been saved by the men whose deeds Victory Hall will commemorate.

By being worthy Americans, and in this way only can Americanism be kept alive, both here and abroad. Americanism must begin at home. Americans abroad will not be good Americans abroad unless we are good Americans at home. If we are ungrateful to the soldiers and sailors who saved us, if we neglect the memories of those who died that we might live, we will be the basest of the base and Americanism will be a stench in the nostrils of the world. [Applause.]

But if we with generous purpose and fixed untiring zeal try to perpetuate the memories of those who saved America and the world, if we commemorate their deeds on the lofty walls and columns of Victory Hall, then Victory Hall will become the Mecca of patriotic Americans from all parts of our great land and from all the sections of the earth. It will be the central source of loving memory of the past and of inspiration for the future, and exemplify to all the peoples, for generations yet to come the spirit of Americanism and its message to the world. [Applause.]

GEN. WINGATE: Gentlemen, the next speaker is a gentleman who served with distinguished credit as one of the judges of the Supreme Court and of the Appellate Division of this city. He is well known and esteemed and there are few men more talented, more public spirited and more able than he is. He will speak to you on the subject of providing "A Forum for the People." I have the pleasure of introducing the HON. CLARENCE J. SHEARN. [Applause.]

"A CITY FORUM"

HON. CLARENCE J. SHEARN

GENERAL WINGATE AND YOUNG AMERICA: I am not going to tell you what the people of New York think of the American Legion, first, because you know; second, because we have all found out in coming into contact with you that you are not very keen on hearing about it; and third, because I have only ten minutes to talk, and having been a member of the civil courts, I have an unmitigated horror of court-martial.

This meeting, as I understand it, is for the purpose, in part, of making you feel satisfied with what New York hopes and proposes to do in your honor, because of course, we do not want to do this thing unless it is the thing you want to have done.

We want our soldiers and sailors to understand that when the grateful people of New York erect the twenty million dollar Victory Hall, the thought will not be for a moment that they are making any return or proffering any reward for what their fighting men and their war-workers did.

We know that there can be no reward for such service, other than that which comes from the consciousness of duty performed like men and true Americans. We know that you responded to the call of country with no thought of reward, and that, as a whole, your members want no reward.

You know what the government owes to the maimed and disabled, and to the families of those who fell, and you and we will see that the government meets that obligation. [Applause.]

But if we cannot reward such service, there is one thing we can do, a thing which you have a right to expect and which we owe to ourselves and our self-respect to do. That is, show our appreciation of your sacrifice by keeping alive and flaming the spirit of

Liberty, patriotism and democracy for which you fought and which your victories re-kindled throughout our land.

General Nicholson said, and I judge from the response that you made to his statement that it is true, that there was a good deal of moonshine about this talk of your marching into war for liberty and patriotism and democracy. Well, in a sense of course that is true. This talk about your having been crusaders has been a figure of speech, but nevertheless there is a large element of truth in that idea. General Nicholson sounded the true note, of course, when he said that what you did was done from a sense of duty, but in our country, thank God, sense of duty is synonymous with patriotism and liberty and democracy. [Applause.]

Now it is with this purpose in view and it is in this spirit that we are dedicating ourselves to the grateful task of erecting Victory Hall.

With all our justifiable pride in that splendid American army, its spirit and its achievements, there is another victory that we must never forget. To my mind, the most remarkable victory in the whole war was the victory which the American people won over themselves.

Given over in large measure to creature comforts, the whole country with scarcely a murmur went cheerfully upon a war basis with all its inconveniences.

Devoted to the ways of peace, our millions almost as a matter of course accepted the draft and concentrated on winning the war.

Intense lovers of freedom, our people submitted for the time being, and on the whole with remarkably little protest, to irksome restrictions on free speech, on the right of assemblage, on the press, and to interference with trade and transportation, not because they loved liberty less, but because they were loyal

to their government and fired with the zeal of a righteous cause.

Labor loyally manned the mines, the factories, the farms and the railroads.

Capital ungrudgingly submitted to unheard of taxation and subordinated profit to service.

The professions mobilized their best talent for the common purpose, pouring into it men like Major Hammond, who sits here by my side.

American Womanhood made possible the success of the Red Cross and kindred war service of incalculable value. [Applause.]

Thinking of these things and picturing our national life as it was before the war, I maintain that it was a great Victory that we won over ourselves.

Out of it all, now that the fighting men have been mustered out and the restraints upon trade and industry have begun to be loosened, there surges a great spirit of unrest.

Just as so many soldiers balked at their old jobs because their enlarged horizon and a consciousness of their powers demanded broader and better fields of activity, so our people, roused by their own efforts and stimulated by their success, refuse to return to old standards and demand a fuller and fairer and better national life.

In all this sea of newness, experiment and change, the great, towering lighthouse of safety and security is that same beacon of liberty, patriotism and democracy that guided our soldiers, our sailors and our people in carrying through the war.

What better monument can we erect to these men and women, how can we more surely keep that beacon lighted than by opening and maintaining in the very centre of this vast city, a great forum for the free discussion of public questions?

Let me allude for a moment to the site, although that subject was to be spoken of by another who is absent. You must realize that this great forum of

which we are speaking is proposed to be located, as it should be located, at the very focus and where lies the nerve centre of this great city. It is the focus because it is the common meeting place of all the great systems of transportation that we now have. I do not know what the focus will be when we get all these busses going that we hear about, but at any rate in our time and now the focus and nerve centre of New York is where these great transportation systems meet. Here from the upper East Side, the Bronx, the Washington Heights Section, from the lower parts of the City, from great Brooklyn and Queens, all these tubes and other means of transportation run to this common junction.

A voice: "How about Staten Island?"

Mr. Shearn: Well, how about airplanes? I suspected that somebody might also call out "How about the shuttle?" If they do not solve the shuttle soon, we will just turn the American Legion loose on them and get action. But clearly here is the logical site for Victory Hall and its forum, the great centre, the great meeting place where it is feasible for men from all parts of the city to gather with the least amount of time and inconvenience. So far as inconvenience goes, which suggests your having to fight your way to 42nd Street in the subway, I guess you boys won't mind that after what you've been through. [Laughter.] Now, in considering the question of a forum, some of you may have in mind some of the Madison Square Garden assemblages of recent memory. But let me say that there will be no room in Victory Hall for those who would destroy or overthrow our basic and precious institution of liberty under the law. [Applause.] There won't have to be any policemen standing around with notebooks at the meetings that will take place within these walls. Why, the very names that are going to be emblazoned on the bronze tablets around the four sides of the great auditorium, as described by General Wingate, the names of the fallen, they and the spirit of this Victory Hall, would

stifle before it was born any sentiment that looked to the overthrow and destruction of the American system of government. So far as providing a forum for anarchy is concerned, we provide such a forum half way up the river, and at the public expense today. [Applause.] But barring that, let us supply a clearing house for ideas, a free place for debate and discussion, a big town meeting where all the isms, the new ideas, the protests, the cures can have air, and where they can be threshed out in the open, reasoned upon and combatted by their opponents.

While many rightly distrust mass opinion reached under impulse of the moment, just as we distrust the *ipse dixit* of an autocrat, most of us are convinced of the sound judgment of the whole American people, once they have thoroughly discussed a public question and taken time to think.

When the American people have had an opportunity to discuss a question, thresh it out in the open, think about it and deliberate upon it, I think we are all agreed that it is the soundest judgment in the world and that we are all of us ready to trust to it and abide by it. I do not believe there is any wisdom in the Russian method of repression. I do not believe it is the wise or the safe or advisable thing to do, to try to drive under cover the expression of new ideas simply because we are not for the moment in sympathy with them. Repression and intolerance are obnoxious to our American institutions. Opinion must be unshackled, just as business clamors to be. I think that where there is a policy presented, however foolish it may seem, however quixotic, if it is in earnest and is put forward with the sincere intention of improving our system of government, the best thing and the wisest thing to do is to have it developed in the open, and if there is anything unsound in it, if there is anything wrong about it, you can trust to the lively intelligence of vigorous young America to demonstrate its evils, to overthrow it and to satisfy the

American people as to the merits of the question. How much better it would be if these questions were talked out in the open. How much better it would be when, in considering a question, for example, like the ratification of the Peace Treaty or the Covenant of the League of Nations, if instead of having to get all our arguments from newspapers that take a more or less partisan view of the question, whatever their viewpoint, we could go to a great public forum and listen to full, free, fair, intelligent discussion of the question in such a temple of patriotism as this which we propose to erect. So with every question that comes to mind, the best thing, the best course to pursue with respect to it, is to invite the sunlight of public opinion. Following such a policy, we will never have to put any sandbags over this beautiful shrine that is going to be erected in Victory Hall, as suggested by one of the speakers. The one great need of our time is full, free, fair, uninspired discussion of our great public questions, instead of the interested, one-sided and partisan printed propaganda that we are so used to and are so tired of.

The glory of old Cooper Union was Lincoln's great anti slavery address a sequel to the series of Lincoln-Douglas debates at various forums in Illinois. The result was a public sentiment that saved the country.

Here let us dedicate a new and greater forum to the memory of those brave boys, who, with these devoted men and women helpers, have once more saved liberty and redeemed our national honor. [Applause.]

GEN. WINGATE: Gentlemen, the next toast of the evening was to be responded to by Mr. Joseph P. Day, who is perhaps the leading real estate man in the city of New York. He was to speak on this 42nd Street site that has been selected for Victory Hall as being

the one best site in the City of New York. Unfortunately he has been detained and it was for that reason that I spoke as I did on the subject. Mr. Day has sent this message:

> "I deeply regret that pressure of business prevents my being with you to attest my hearty approval of your worthy cause, and explain to you in my best judgment the desirability of the site you have selected for this well-earned monument to our boys of the Great City of New York, who made the supreme sacrifice for their beloved country. Suffice it to say that I am with you in spirit and would gladly lend the best of my energy and ability in helping to crown your effort with the successful accomplishment of so grand and noble an undertaking.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> JOSEPH P. DAY."

[Applause.]

There are two points that Mr. Day, if he had been here, would have spoken about, in regard to which there has been considerable discussion. One is the criticism that has been made upon this site, particularly by some very aesthetic and high-browed gentlemen, that it is a great mistake to put a memorial building of this character upon this site where it is going to be as they say "in a hole." That is to say, it is going to be surrounded and smothered by high buildings. I myself have received a letter from a prominent society protesting against the selection of this site upon that ground. While at first I was provoked at the objection, I then had to laugh because the writer never stopped to think that on the north side of this site is the Grand Central Depot, which is only two stories high, so that Victory Hall is going to be a story higher than the Depot, and will therefore be visible the whole length of Park Avenue. Certainly no one will deny that the Grand Central Depot is a

very imposing building and will be more so when the elevated structure in front of it is taken down which will be done as soon as the railroad can afford it. Why therefore will not Victory Hall be imposing?

Then one hears objectors saying, "Isn't this a scheme of hotel people to prevent the erection of a hotel on that site that will interfere with those hotels that are already there?" The answer to this is that if Victory Hall is a good thing for the City and the Legion, why should any one question the motives of any one who is willing to give it a substantial contribution? With the great task that is before us to raise $20,000,000, we would be foolish if we were not glad to take money from anybody.

Mr. Day, not being here, there is present a distinguished Legion man whom I would like to introduce in his place. He enlisted in the Army, was sent to France where he was assigned to the French Chasseurs as an observer. He turned out, however, to be a fighter and not a looker-on; so that he was not only complimented in general orders, but was elected a life member of the Legion of French Chausseurs, a great honor, although I understand a life membership in the French Chasseurs is, generally speaking, for a very limited period. [Laughter.] He then went to the front with the American Fifth Division and on one occasion was sent out to reconnoiter with a number of men who were killed, yet he went on alone until he ascertained the position of certain machine guns and on his way back was wounded but went back and delivered his report. The outcome was that he saved many American lives but almost died from loss of blood.

I have the pleasure of introducing to you Major Philip J. McCook. [Applause.]

I do not know whether I should not have said that I had the pleasure of introducing "Judge" McCook, but I want to tell you I think more of a Major than I do of a Judge. [Applause.]

"A MEMORIAL"

MAJOR PHILIP J. MCCOOK

Mr. Toastmaster, My Superior Officer, General Wingate, and Men and Women of New York:

It really was a shame that whatever time I had was not added to the talk of my predecessor, to whom I always look up. He was also my predecessor in the Supreme Court and if he had not retired I would not be introduced as a judge. I am introduced as one of you. I hope you will consider me so. I am proud to be so. I was very much pleased by the speech of the Admiral because he recognized a body which I have not heard mentioned here otherwise tonight, a body which I am sure is very much interested—to which I belong; that is, the Spanish American War Veterans. Incidentally, the Admiral I believe was the first man in the American service ashore in that war. He took the little "Petrel" under the guns of the Spanish fleet at Cavite in the Philippines near Manila and then he went ashore with the American flag. [Applause.]

I am also glad that he spoke a word of pleasure that the manhood of America developed puttees, instead of lace borders, on its trousers. I am a great believer in American manhood and American womanhood and I know one like the other holds that America did the right thing in getting in this war and helping carry out the noble work that the Admiral and the General and the others did before us.

I cannot speak for the Spanish War people; I cannot speak for the World War men and women; I hold no credentials, no mandate from them. I can speak, however, as an individual who has heard here for the first time at some length about this extraordinary project. I am convinced that of all the ideas put forward it is the most practical. It is obvious that of

all the ideas put forward it has received the most careful and conscientious attention. As to the details, of course, I do not care to speak. Those have been considered and will be further considered and if improvements are possible, those improvements, no doubt, will be made. But the conception is glorious.

The spirit behind it is touching and is thoroughly American. I should be very sorry as a member of the American Legion to see that body of men and women stand for anything that was unAmerican. I should be very sorry to see them stand for anything that involved personal profit. They dedicated themselves when they went into this war to the proposition that, being members of the great club called the American Nation, they felt responsible to pay their share of the dues. That is a proper spirit and I am glad that this project contemplates financial participation by members of the American Legion, even if not obligatory participation. I feel sure that they will do their part.

The central idea of the great hall is a forum and a temple. About the temple and the forum, better speakers than I have already expressed themselves. It is fitting that those who have fought for "the altars of their fathers and the temples of their gods" should here find in such a beautiful spot, in the center of this great city, an altar, a temple, a shrine of patriotism and of memory.

I remember very well in the early days of the war when I was consulted about the draft, of which I had the honor to be the director for the City of New York later on, that the Provost Marshal General asked a number of us how the draft would be received in New York, whether there would be objections, whether there would be riots, because everybody knew there were dissatisfied and hostile elements here. We told him there would be no riots; there would be no trouble. He expressed relief and said, "Then the draft will go through successfully, because New York represents a cross-section of our mixed American population."

And so it was. And so it is particularly fitting that in this city, which gave of the blood of all the nations of the world, in the name of America, there should be such a shrine, to testify "that these dead have not died in vain." [Applause.]

GEN. WINGATE: The next speaker is a gentleman who has been very prominent in all movements of a philanthropic character, prison reforms, President of the Parks and Playgrounds Association. He is thoroughly familiar with the wants particularly of the children of New York and will speak to you on the subject of the youth of the city and their relation to Victory Hall. I introduce to you HON. GEORGE GORDON BATTLE.

"HOW OUR YOUTHS WILL BE AFFECTED"

HON. GEORGE GORDON BATTLE

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: The dean of all the after-dinner speakers in this country, Mr. Chauncey M. Depew, says there are three principles every after-dinner speaker should observe. They are simple and brief; that is, stand up, speak up, shut up. [Laughter.] I have stood up, I shall do my best to speak up and I promise you that I shall very shortly shut up. I was much interested in hearing Major Putnam's account of his son's effort to get into the Canadian Army and it reminded me of an experience I had in the Draft Board of which I was a member during the war—the Draft Board, by the way, which included this hotel. A boy came in and he brought his questionnaire and we asked him various questions. He said he was 21. He was very youthful looking and I said "You are 21?" That, you will remember, was in 1917 and he said "Yes." I said, "According to that then you were born in 1896." He said "Yes." I said, "Where were you born?" And he said, "I was born in East 34th Street." I asked him some other questions and then following a trick that we learn in court in the course of cross-examination, I said "Where did your parents live in their early married life?" He said "They first lived in Connecticut and then came to New York." I said, "When did they come to New York?" He said "They came to New York, to East 34th Street, in 1900." "It appears then," I said, "that you were four years old when you were born?" "Well," he said, "it does look that way" [Laughter]. I said, "Hadn't you better go back and stay at school a year or two; this war will probably last two years and you will have a chance to come in then." He didn't like the idea, though, of waiting. "Well," he says, "they tell me everything goes in Canada; I will go up there where

they are not so darned particular" [Laughter]. That was the spirit of the youth of our city during the war.

I think, my friends, that the most important inquiry on any public question is how it will affect the youth of our community and of our country, because the future of the country is in the hands of its youth. We older folk have for the most part shot our bolt. For good or for evil we have done our share and what we have done has now gone over the mill. But the youth, the young, the boys and the girls, they have the future in their grasp. It is true that age is not always a matter of years. You have had proof to demonstrate that here tonight. General Wingate will never be old. He can't be old. He has got the spirit and the soul of a boy, the progressive and elastic and vigorous mind of youth. He always had it. But, unhappily, he is only a rare instance. Most of us follow the beaten track after we get along and the progressive forward looking movement of all time must come from the young men and the young women.

So I say it seems to me the most important inquiry about any public question is, how it will affect the young men and the young women of this country. So far as this Victory Hall touches the youth of our city, it seems to me that it can produce only the best results. It will serve as a meeting place where they can assemble and take counsel together. It will promote the spirit of community conscience and community consciousness which is so vital and so essential to our public welfare. As Judge Shearn has so ably and clearly indicated to you, it will afford a splendid opportunity for the discussion of public questions by the young men and the young women of this city. It will be a great meeting place, a great assembly point; it will be an altar for the noble traditions of the past and a shrine for the still more glorious and hopeful inspiration of the future. [Applause.]

GEN. WINGATE: There is one more speaker who will address you tonight. We have heard from soldiers, from judges, from Navy men, from philanthropists, but we have not heard anything from the women. The women have played a magnificent part in this war. Something was said about feminism and undoubtedly there were before the war a great many men who were feminine, but I am glad to say that while I do not consider that that is real feminism, yet if that is the case there are a whole lot of women who turned out to be masculine. [Laughter.] Certainly they do good work. I would like also to say that in my judgment the man who goes over the top and leads a charge on a lot of machine gun nests does not have to display half the cold courage that is required of one that drives an ambulance over a shell-torn road in the dark, to pick up somebody he knows nothing about, or that shown by a Red Cross nurse who attends to a patient, or the Salvation Army lassie that cooks her cakes and doughnuts under heavy shell fire.

We have here the first woman representative in the Assembly in the State of New York. She has been good enough to take charge of the bill which had to be introduced in Albany in order to enable us to have the legal right to condemn the land that we need for the site of Victory Hall. As you know, unless we possess that power we cannot buy it for a reasonable price, while if we have it the owner of the property knows very well that if he demands an exorbitant amount we can go to court and condemn it. But without that bill we are at the mercy of whoever owns any of the buildings upon that part of the site which is not vacant. I have much pleasure in introducing to you MISS MARGUERITE L. SMITH.

"LEGISLATION"

MISS MARGUERITE L. SMITH

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: I have cooked a pancake but I have never cooked it under shell fire, which I wish I might have been able to do. In talking to you tonight I feel something like the man who was walking along the river and he came to a dock and found a man who had fallen in the water. "Why," he said, "how did you come to fall in?" and the man evidently had a flask in his pocket before he fell in. I don't know what happened to him after he got in, but he said, "Friend, I did not come to fall in, I came to fish." [Laughter.]

So I really did not come to speak to you but I just came to see this crowd of the American Legion and the Victory Hall Association represented here. They would not let me go overseas; I wanted to. They said I was not old enough to get a passport. However, they thought I was old enough to go to the Assembly and when they would not let me go overseas I worked as hard as I could over here along many lines. I felt very much honored when the Victory Hall Association asked me to introduce this bill into the Assembly for the condemnation of this property because I wanted to do all I could for the boys who did sacrifice and go overseas, and for those who did not get overseas. I found in the Assembly in introducing this bill and working for it that we have got to fight for things we want, but we can't fight so we antagonize the other people too much. So I am glad to say now that this bill is out of Committee and I have gone to the Democrats and I have gone to the Republicans and I can't find any opposition anywhere, so I think it is going through next week without a doubt. [Applause.]

I also want to say to this group of American Legion men, that I was interested in a bonus for the men of this State [Applause]. We had some recommendations saying that the men did not want a bonus, but we had a group at Albany of the American Legion and we find that the majority do favor a bonus [Applause]. We all realize that what you went over for cannot be paid to you in money. That is all very true but I think a bonus at this time will at least show the appreciation this State has for its men, and we also want to say that the bonus, as put in the Assembly, came from a study that I have made of what has been done along this line and what I thought was the best, and I was mighty glad when the American Legion said they endorsed my bill, and I have tried to amend it so it meets all the recommendations the American Legion can offer, and I also only hope that the bill will come out for the approval of the members of the American Legion [Applause].

Those are the two bills that I am sponsoring in the Assembly, the bonus bill for the State of New York and the Victory Hall Association Bill. I feel if I can get those two bills out and help along on the rent problem, that I have at least tried to work for the constituents of the Nineteenth Assembly District. I thank you. [Applause.]

GEN. WINGATE: I now declare the meeting adjourned.

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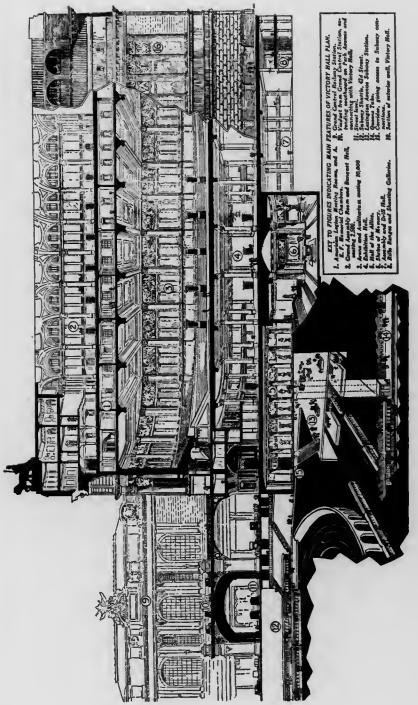

VICTORY HALL

NEW YORK CITY'S WAR MEMORIAL AND FORUM

CROSS SECTION (VERTICAL EAST AND WEST) OF INTERIOR.

MSH 21863

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